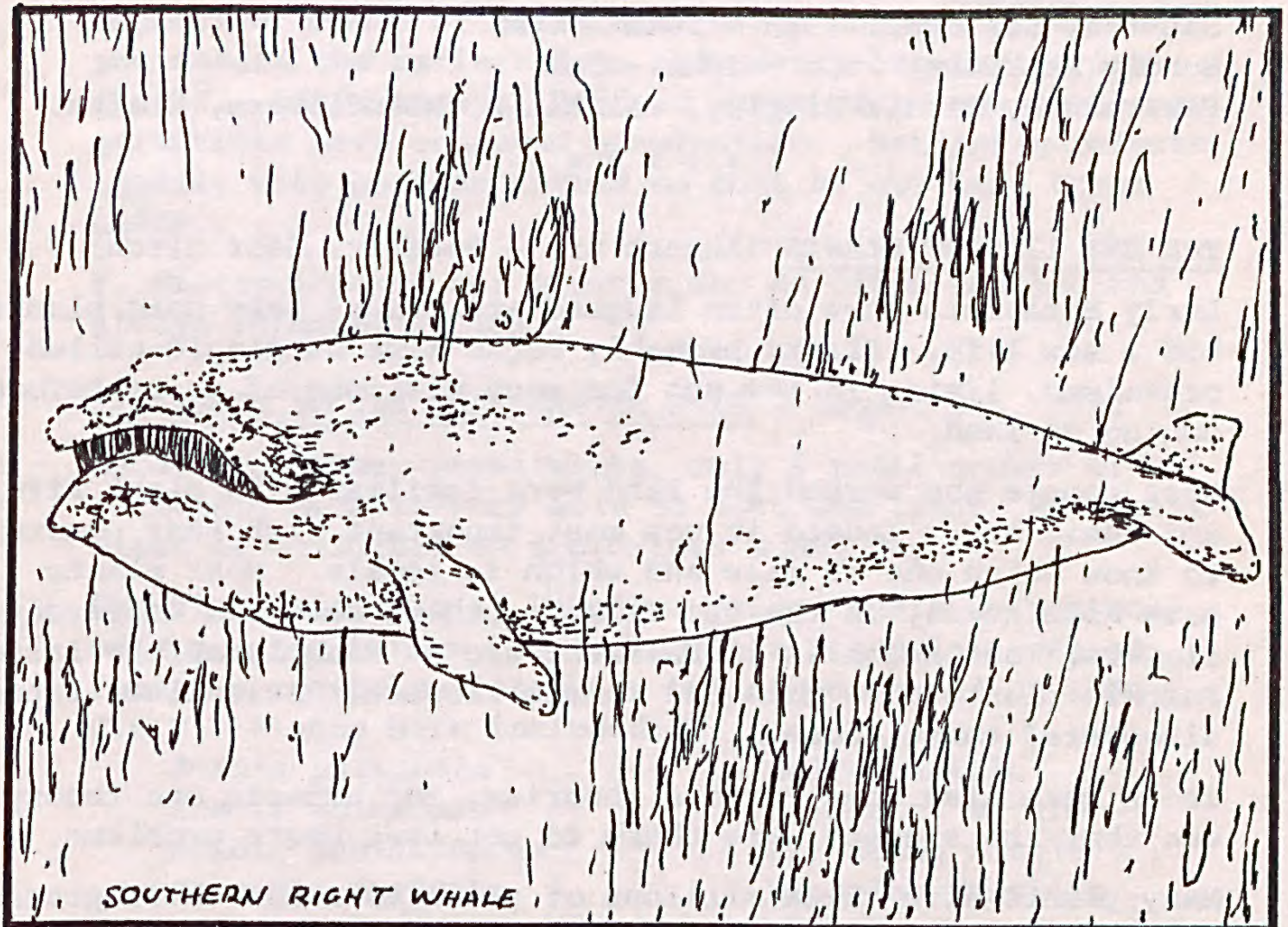


Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

SEPTEMBER, 1982

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

- Meeting** 3rd September - "A Trip to Northern India"
Speaker: Mr. J. Brisbane
- Meeting** 1st October - "Microscopic Aquatic Life"
Speaker: Mr. P. Genery
- Excursion** 5th September - Sunday - Half Day - Dereel
Leader: Mr. L. Fink
- Excursion** 18th September - Saturday - Full Day - Mosquito Flat
Leader: Dr. F. Harrap



SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE

President: Dr. F. HARRAP Phone 30 1651
Vice-pres: Mrs. M. ROTHERAM Phone 31 4054
Secretary: Miss H. BURGESS Phone 31 2210
Treasurer: Mr. S. REYNOLDS Phone 32 7721
Editor Mr. J. NETHERWAY Phone 32 7296

**** This meeting is at Barkly St**

Meetings, as specified, are held in the Administration Building of the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 8 pm.

EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS, BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS, OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

EXCURSION - MOSQUITO FLAT - SATURDAY AUGUST 18th

Because this is a Saturday excursion, departure will be from near the railway engine in the Civic Hall Car Park at 9.30am.

Lunch will be at Mosquito Flat - please see tabled sketch map etc. for venue - move off again at say 1.45pm.

Back in Ballarat for ca. 6.00pm.

C.C.V. MEETING AT BALLARAT

The Conservation Council of Victoria is holding at "out of town" meeting at Ballarat on Saturday September 25th, 10am - 4pm.

Details are to be forwarded with the agenda - meeting place to be announced in the press.

ANGAIR WILDFLOWER SHOW and ART AND CRAFT DISPLAY - ANGLESEA HALL

Saturday September 25th - 10am - 6pm

Sunday September 26th - 10am - 5pm

Excursions, Nature Display, Paintings, Wildflowers, Crafts.

* * * * *

THE SEX LIFE OF PLANTS (August 6th - Speaker: Geof Sitch)

Early Botanists were often laughed at because they said plants had a sex life. Plants probably began life as single-celled organisms, living in the sea for many millions of years before coming on land.

Most people who worked the land were familiar with plant life, and their sex. Indeed it was most important with many plants to know which one is male and which is female. Most plants have both sexes, in the one flower; others have two different flowers; our Begonias in Ballarat are an example of the latter. Pumpkin plants have male and female flowers. Scientists later discovered these facts.

There were also some curious theories, for example one theory was that the stamens were there to get over waste problems.

Many plants have taken millions of years to reach their present state of evolution.

Insects are the main flowering plant inseminators: bees, wasps, butterflies, moths, beetles, etc.

Gregor Mendel probably found out more about plant genetics than any other person - his work was published in an obscure journal and its value not appreciated in his lifetime.

One of the most interesting group of flowering plants is Orchids that look like female wasps and use male wasps to inseminate other orchids.

Beard orchids use mainly female wasps. Some flowering plants such as maize need wind to shake the pollen from the flowers to the silken threads on the immature cobs. Maize flowers have no need to attract insects and are not colourful or showy.

The seeds of some plants need to pass through the digestive tracts of animals or birds to germinate them; one needed the extinct dodo and nearly became extinct itself. After several hundred years of no new seedlings scientists have achieved germination. Wattles germinate readily with heat as indeed do most of our hard testa seeds.

F. Harrap thanked our speaker for an often amusing and always informative talk.

EXCURSION TO THE CASTLEMAINE AREA - August 8th, 1982

Because of other commitments, only a small number of fortunate members were able to meet our leader Mr. Geoff Sitch at Guildford on a glorious sunny day.

Our first stop was at Vaughan Springs where we partook of spa water before proceeding to a triangular area of roadside recently disturbed, but now nurtured by the C.R.B. Plants here included:

<i>Acacia pycnantha</i>	Golden wattle
<i>Acacia acinaceae</i>	Gold-dust wattle
<i>Acacia genistifolia</i>	Spreading wattle
<i>Cassinia arctuata</i>	Drooping Cassinia
<i>Eucalyptus polyanthemus</i>	Red Box
<i>Grevillea alpina</i>	Goldfield's Grevillea
<i>Leucopogon ericoides</i>	Pink Beard Heath
<i>Dillwynia sericea</i>	Showy Parrot Pea

Our leader said that we were just a couple of weeks too early to see the bushland in a blaze of colour.

Our route took us along the southern tip of Fryers Range which is to become a State Park on L.C.C. recommendation. In the Glenluce bushland we made several stops to see

<i>Tetratheca ciliata</i>	Pink Bells
<i>Acacia acinacea</i>	Gold-dust wattle
<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	Silver wattle
<i>Acacia mitchellii</i>	Mitchell's wattle
<i>Acacia aculeatissima</i>	Prostrate wattle
<i>Acacia lonigera</i>	Woolly wattle
<i>Pulteneae pedunculata</i>	Matted bush-pea
<i>Epacris impressa</i>	Common heath
<i>Leptospermum myrsinoides</i>	Heath tea-tree
<i>Thysanotus patersonii</i>	Twining Fringe-lily
<i>Hovea heterophylla</i>	Common hovea
<i>Drosera whittakeri</i>	Scented sundew
<i>Grevillea</i> spp.	Fryerstown

Proceeding along Fryers Ridge Road we passed over early bridges which had been carefully constructed from the local slate, and made stops to see:

<i>Oxylobium procumbeus</i>	Trailing oxylobium
<i>Dillwynia ramosissima</i>	Bushy parrot-pea
<i>Platylobium formosum</i>	Handsome flat-pea
<i>Acacia mitchellii</i>	Mitchell's wattle
<i>Acacia aspera</i>	Rough wattle
<i>Acacia oxycedrus</i>	Spike wattle
<i>Acacia paradosea</i>	Hedge wattle
<i>Correa reflexa</i>	Common correa (yellow form)
<i>Dianella revoluta</i>	Black anther flax-lily
<i>Eucalyptus goniocalyx</i>	Long-leaf box
<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>	River red-gum
<i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i>	Cherry Ballart
<i>Eriostemon verrucosus</i>	Fairy Wax-flower
<i>Leucopogon biflorus</i>	Twin-flower beard-heath
<i>Brachyloma daphnoides</i>	Daphne heath
<i>Isotoma fluviatilis</i>	Swamp isotome
<i>Plakea sericea</i>	Silky hakea

A stop for lunch at the Fryerstown cricket ground enabled more Ballarat members and Mr. & Mrs. Bruton of the Castlemaine club to join us in beautiful surroundings.

To help our digestion we took a leisurely stroll around the lovely sandstone home which stands on a hill overlooking the cricket ground. Privately owned property, it is being restored and extended, and the slate fence, some 200-300 metres square, being rebuilt.

Our next drive, as we proceeded to Irishtown, took in such picturesque names as Murdering Flat and Break-neck Hill. In this area we saw the now closed Duke of Cornwall mine, with its old powerhouse and the powder magazine still standing, and visited the oldest graveyard in the district to see a simple but beautifully hand-carved headstone of 1855.

Our journeys next took us to the Mickleford Forest area, the forest consisting mainly of red box, grey box, yellow gum, and some fine specimens of red iron bark. Some seeds of the latter were distributed to those who wished to try growing them.

The plant list for Mickleford Forest was:

<i>Clearea teretifolia</i>	Cypress Daisy-bush
<i>Eucalyptus sideroxylon</i>	Red ironbark
<i>Eucalyptus leucoxylon</i>	
var. <i>prunosa</i>	Yellow gum
<i>Acacia gunnii</i>	Ploughshare wattle
<i>Acacia pycnantha</i>	Golden wattle
<i>Pterostylis longifolia</i>	Tall greenhood
<i>Acrotriche serrulata</i>	Honey-pots
<i>Astroloma humifusum</i>	Cranberry heath

It was here that we saw the spotted pardalote and the yellow-tufted honeyeater in profusion. Noteworthy sightings included a flock of 20 mountain duck on a dam near the Fryerstown cricket ground, numerous white ibis in the fields, yellow-billed spoonbills overhead, and a wedge-tailed eagle, at first just above us, but which soon soared to greater heights.

Our sincere thanks to Mr. Geoff Sitch of the Castlemaine club for devoting a whole day, as well as giving the Friday evening lecture, to our members. Many of us will want to try to re-trace our path in a few weeks' time, when, as Geoff says, the area will be "a blaze of colour".

Pat Murphy and Jack Netherway

A TRIP TO INNAMINCKA

In July a busload of Naturalists headed for Innamincka and warmer weather. It was a long way for 9 days so we were in the bus for most of the daylight hours apart from the two days by Cooper Creek. It was an enjoyable trip and the company most congenial.

Our trip took us through the South Australian wineries to Peterborough first night, then to Hawker and past the Flinders Ranges to Leigh Creek for our luncheon stop. The water tank was leaking so a detour was made to the new thriving Leigh Creek township. Overnight stop was at Koortanyaninna Creek on the Strezlecki Track. Like most of the creeks it was dry. For about 30 km along The Track the landscape was of wind-eroded sandhills - the only high spots being where the saltbush and other vegetation was growing. After the final crossing of the Strezlecki Creek Innamincka came into view. The main buildings are The Trading Post, an Hoel-Motel and the relics of the AIM hostel. Our camp for 3 nights was by the Cooper Creek at the Cullyamurra Waterhole - a delightful spot. Galahs and Little Corellas were numerous as were the White-plumed Honeyeaters in the red gums, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. Whistling Kites were nesting, a Barking Owl viewed us from his perch and Black-fronted Dotterels and Orange Chats fed among the stones in the bed of the creek. The mornings we had free and one afternoon we went to the "DIG" Tree and the other to Burke's grave site where Bustards were sighted beside the road. Another early start and we were on our way to Mootwingee. After turning off the Strezlecki Track we crossed the red sandhills which run North to South. Sitting in the back of the bus at this time was quite an experience. From Cameron's Corner we entered the Sturt National Park - an interesting area, but no time to stop - and on to Tibooburra, an aboriginal word meaning "heap of rocks"; the town is surrounded by granite outcrops. Time only to refuel and then down the Silver City Highway until sunset for an overnight bush camp. A bus trip in these parts would not be complete without getting bogged in the sand. An hour later we were on our way to Mootwingee. We had a few hours to explore the aboriginal paintings, etc. before sunset.

Another early morning start for the short trip to the Menindee Lakes. Our campsite was beside the Darling River in the Kinchega National Park. The water level of Menindee Lake has been raised and now hundreds of trees are dead - such a different sight to twenty years ago when I was last in this area.

Back to Stawell via Mildura and the end of an enjoyable safari.

Over 130 bird species were seen. My regret is that I saw neither the Gibber nor Crimson Chats. The majority of birds were seen from the bus.

We were too early and it was very dry for the Spring flowers. Some plant species noted were *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Grevillea striata*, *Eremophila* species, *Callitris columellaris*, *Pittosporum phillyreoides*, *Flindersia maculosa*, *Maireana* species, *Acacia aneura*, *A. loderi*, *A. tetragonophylla* and other wattles, *Crotalaria* and many grasses.

A total of 3681 km was covered - a test on one's stamina!

Helen Burgess

W.V.F.N.C.A. WINTER MEETING

Seven F.N.C.B. members attended the winter gathering of the Western Victoria Field Naturalists Clubs Association, hosted by the Geelong F.N.C., at Ocean Grove during the weekend of July 30 - August 1.

In general terms, the organisation of the programme arranged by the Geelong sub-committee, the availability of birds (in particular) singled out for study, the fine weather and the good company ensured a very pleasant and enjoyable time.

Excursions to selected venues in the Bellarine Peninsula were most successful, and inspection of areas of the You Yangs and an aboriginal initiation ground on the Little River added interest to the weekend.

All participants of the well attended 'camp out' were able to observe a flock of what could be approximately 10% of the world population of the Orange Bellied Parrot, on recent counts. Sixteen birds were observed at close quarters, wintering on Swan Island.

Another highlight for folk from the hinterland was a group of five Giant Petrels off Black Rocks beach, consisting of four dark phase and one white phase birds.

Inspection of the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve revealed a great deal of development both in the growth of the plantations and in the appointments to the picnic and administrative areas.

Some items for noting:

from the meeting of the Association.

1. It was agreed that the offer of the Ballarat club to host the Spring meeting 1983, be accepted.
(Something to look forward to! - Ed.)
2. It was agreed that a simple constitution be formed, for consideration at the next meeting which will be held at Creswick/Clunes, October 23,24 next.
3. Funds for the A.C. Beaglehole publishing fund are low, and there is a great need for promotion of sales of the Plant Checklists already printed and for generation of new funding to ensure completion of the project.
3. The popular Safari tours (Kingston of Stawell) will continue next year.
4. Concerns were expressed at dangers to the natural environment which might be brought about by amendments to the Mining Act. Clubs were urged to seek information on and monitor these issues.

G.W. Binns

SOUTHERN WHITE WHALES AT WARRNAMBOOL

On July 29th the "Australian" reported that, after 80 years absence, a herd of Southern Right Whales (*Balaena glacialis australis*) had returned to the traditional whale resting and breeding place at Nursery Bay, Warrnambool. The twelve whales, some almost 18m long were using the bay to rear two calves before heading south for colder waters.

Two days later after further reports in the Age and the Courier, I headed south to Nursery Bay.

By this time there appeared to be four or five adult whales and two calves remaining; the calves were after 10 weeks from birth, nearly 7m long. The adults and calves seemed to be travelling anticlockwise in an oval, coming within about 300m of the lookout point at Logans Beach. During the two and a half hours that I was there there were various bursts of activity with at least one calf leaping and sidling back or nudging across the back of an adult. Just before I left, one adult raised its tail fluke and thrashed it down some thirty times.

A second visit a fortnight later showed a redistribution of adults and calves. Two adults and two calves (now nearly as long apparently as the adults) remained close together in an area near the beach and protected on one side by a shallow reef. The remaining two (or possibly three) adult whales stood off to the East about five hundred metres, varying their positions from fairly close inshore to some distance out. I wondered if the lone adults were keeping watch for predators (the killer whale) while the adults and calves sought the protection of the reef. There wasn't the activity of the previous visit though one calf leapt in the surface in a flattened version of a porpoise movement. Just briefly one of the lone adults lifted its enormous tail and beat down.

The Age suggested that the Chamber of Commerce could adopt the motto "you can bank on the whales". A renaming of the town - Whaleambool - appears to be a very remote possibility.

F. Harrap

AUSTRALIAN BIRD CALL CHAMPIONSHIP

The second Australian Bird Call Championship organised by the Maryborough Field Naturalists was held in the Salvation Army Hall, High Street, Maryborough on Saturday 28th August 1982. The event was conducted in conjunction with the annual Maryborough Golden Wattle Festival.

The programme began with the well-known naturalist and photographer, Mr. Eric DuBourg, showing a fine selection of bird slides. Of particular interest were those of the colourful robin family, including the striking red-capped robin, the yellow robin, and its nest and the very handsome black and white hooded robin.

The six contestants competing in the Australian Bird Call Championship each had to imitate a laughing kookaburra, and at least four, but not more than ten, other Australian native birds within a time slot of four minutes. We listened to a wide variety of bird calls including seagulls, whistling eagles, baby magpies, spangled drongos and greenwing pigeons.

The event was judged by noted ornithologist, Mr. Roger Thomas, of Linton. He awarded first prize to Mr. Greg McKenzie of Maryborough who received a cash prize, donated by the Maryborough Festival Committee, and a handsome trophy which was made from casuarina timber by local naturalist members. The perpetual trophy was made from ironbark timber, and this trophy will be inscribed with Greg's name.

The Ragamuffin Band rendered colonial music later in the evening and there was much laughter and hand clapping to the beat of their lively music.

The night concluded with a chorus of the kookaburras which assuredly is going to hold a permanent place in this annual event.

An audience in excess of two hundred people enjoyed the night's programme. The local club is to be congratulated.

Pat Murphy